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ABSTRACT

This practicum intervention was designed to improve the effectiveness of a middle school's interdisciplinary teams. While the school's sixth grade teams were judged to be effective in implementing the district's philosophy, two seventh grade and two eighth grade teams, composed of 18 teachers and 588 students, were among 70 interdisciplinary teams in county schools judged to be ineffective on the basis of survey responses. Interdisciplinary curriculum planning was particularly problematic. A curriculum grid was developed before staff development activities were implemented. The grid packet contained a mapping of each grade level's curriculum, a skills checklist for each subject area, a list of objectives for possible curriculum integration, and seven activities that could be transformed into thematic topics for use in correlating curriculum during any 9-week period. The purpose of the packet was to allow interdisciplinary teams of teachers to see vital connections and commonalities in their curricula. The packet was used in staff development activities. Evaluation data suggested that the use of a supportive tool, such as the curriculum connection packet, is a viable way to move interdisciplinary team teachers into the curriculum integration phase of teaming. The appendices include a team interview questionnaire, a teaming competencies checklist, and the teacher survey on cross curriculum connections. (RH)

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A PROGRAM TO INCREASE EFFECTIVE TEAMING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Mary Jane Sevick

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A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education at Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

December/1989

December/1989

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here will earn similar respect.

Signed Mary Jane Lenick

Abstract

Increasing Team Effectiveness in the Middle School.
Sevick, Mary Jane, 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Middle Schools/Preadolescents/School Climate/ Curriculum Development/Integrated Activities/ Integrated Curriculum/Fused Curriculum/Instructional Teams/ Educational Cooperation/Hidden Curriculum/Teaming/ Team Leader Teaching/

The high percentage of ineffective middle school interdisciplinary teams in a designated middle school was addressed by the development of a curriculum integration packet for teams. Seventh and eighth grade interdisciplinary teams having been designated as ineffective teams at the practicum site, were given a curriculum connections packet created and developed by the practicum author and a team of middle school teachers. Team leader training workshops, monthly information packets and a teacher survey were used to implement the curriculum integration strategy. Assessment of effectiveness was done by comparing team interview questionaires from the previous year with recent interviews. The results indicated that use of the interdisciplinary team as an instructional force is a determining factor in team effectiveness. It was concluded that the use of a supportive tool, such as the curriculum connection packet, is a viable way to move interdisciplinary team teachers into the curriculum integrating phase of teaming. Appendices include a team interview questionaire, teaming competencies checklist and teacher survey on cross-curriculum connections.

Nova University
Center For The Advancement of Education
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314

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Practicum Title A PROGRAM TO INCREASE EFFECTIVE TEAMING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Student's Name MARY JANE SEVICK

Program Site ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Date December 1, 1989

Observer's Name Eugene Pickler Eugene B. Pickler
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Observer's position PROGRAM CONSULTANT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS Phone # (407) 422-3200 Ext. 379

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

The activities and products associated with this project are consistent with this district's efforts to enhance the use of the interdisciplinary team as an instructional force and will assist in this endeavor.

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE

Background

This practicum took place in a Central Florida county which is the 23rd largest district out of more that l6,000 in the nation and the sixth largest in Florida. This school district is composed of 74 elementary, l8 middle, l0 high, 5 alternative/exceptional, and 4 adult vocational technical schools. The focus of this practicum was middle schools. There are 152 interdisciplinary teams in the district's 18 middle schools. Each team is composed of four or five core academic teachers. Each sixth grade team is made up of a language arts, math, social studies, science, and reading teacher. Each seventh and eighth grade team is composed of a language arts, math, social studies, and science teacher. In ten of the 18 schools, exploratory teachers are assigned to teams on a four, six or nine-week rotation schedule, or semester basis depending on the length of the course. The middle schools are staffed by a principal, a grade level coordinator for each grade level, and three guidance counselors.

These schools encompass a wide range of socio-economic levels with the majority being average. The district's middle school population consists of 65.02 percent Caucasian, 25.07 percent Black, 7.54 percent Hispanic, 2.24 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and .13 percent American Indian.

The author is currently serving in the capacity of district resource teacher for intermediate education. The author has a bachelor of arts and master of arts degree in secondary social studies education and has been a practicing middle level classroom educator for twenty-five years. The author was part of the districts' writing team that created the Middle School Training Module and trained teachers for the transition from junior high to middle school.

The educational mission of the middle school program in this Central Florida district is to provide those programs that will best meet the diverse physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of the preadolescent. In achieving this mission the most essential element of the middle school, and the one to which this district is totally committed, is the interdisciplinary team structure (National Middle School Association, 1982).

In 1976, on recommendation from the Disctrict Advisory Committee and by direction from the School Board, a task force undertook an in-depth, two year study of the district's junior high programs. As a result of that study, the task force proposed an intermediate educational plan that called for: teaming of teachers and curriculum, sharing of common students, and expanded guidance in the classroom (Intermediate Education Study, 1979).

The district's junior high schools were given five years in which to implement an intermediate program that would function with a district structure of middle school standards yet meet their individual population needs. The 1987-88 school year marked complete transition of the district's 18 junior highs to middle schools.

This practicum was implemented in one of the middle schools located in the inner city area of the district. The school has an enrollment of 1,073 students in grades six through eight. The school is in a predominately middle to low socio-economic area. The majority being low socio-economic. The school's population consists of 36.63 percent Caucasian, 52.05 percent Black, 8.57 percent Hispanic, 1.73 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.02 percent American Indian. There are 403 males and 582 females.

The school is staffed by a principal, two assistant principals and a dean of students, who serve as grade level coordinators. The faculty is composed of 57 classroom teachers, l6 males and 41 females. The instructional staff consists of 74 percent Caucasian, 23 percent Black, .018 percent Hispanic, and .018 percent Asian. These teachers are aided by classified personnel, such as aides, custodians, secretaries, and cafeteria workers. There are three guidance counselors, a reading resource specialist, and media specialist.

The stated mission of the practicum school is to provide through interdisciplinary teams: 1) a sense of "family" or "belonging to a community" with the150 students and the team teachers, rather than the total school population; and 2) coordination of academic classes where practical to show interrelatedness of all learning. This school feels that the focus of education is the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of the student. The school places great value on teaching students to become responsible independent learners and community citizens within a safe and family oriented environment.

Problem Statement

For the last two years, the district level program consultant and the resource teacher for middle school have monitored the implementation of the district's middle school standards and philosophy. On site observations, team interviews, and team leader surveys have identified team climate and team identity to be established facts. However, curriculum collaboration among the teams' teachers has been visibly lacking at many schools.

Ineffective teaming was documented by responses on a team survey (Appendix A:40) prepared by the Middle School Program Consultant and the practicum author. Of the 152 interdisciplinary teams in the county, 70 were judged to be ineffective. Team ineffectiveness at the school sites ranged from .06 percent to 88 percent. Because the teaming concept is so new, it is difficult to determine a normal percentage rate for effectiveness, but one can expect the effectiveness rate to follow the pattern for any new program; namely 70 percent success rate. Therefore, the teaming effectiveness rate for the county is definitely in need of improvement.

Due to the large number of students involved with teaming (approximately 24,000 students), the problem this practicum addressed was to increase the effectiveness of the teams by 30 percent at one middle school in order to produce a higher teaming effectiveness rate that would be more in alignment with what could be expected. The school site selected for the practicum had 60 percent of its teams operating ineffectively.

This school has three sixth grade teams that are effective in implementing the district's middle school philosophy. However, the remaining two seventh grade and two eighth grade teams, composed of eigthteen teachers and 588 students, were ineffective. Ten of the eighteen teachers have been at the school site for eight or more years. Those teachers' surveys (Appendix A:40, B:42 , and C:45) were very negative and expressed a junior high school/high school orientation. The school administrators in place during the in-service training and preparation prior to middle school implementation were less than enthusiastic. The present administration, of which the principal and dean are new, is striving to develop a more student centered focus and climate.

The staff development designed for and implemented through this practicum is an integral part of the administration's developmental process of creating more effective teams.

Outcome objectives

The outcome objectives which were designed for this practicum, prior to the ten week implementation period, were outlined as follows:

1. At the identified school at least 70 percent of the teams in the seventh and eighth grades would be performing effective teaming. This objective was measured through the team interview questionnaire (Appendix A:40), a teaming competencies checklist devised by Paul George and administered to team leaders (Appendix B:42), and on site observations.
2. At the identified school an indirect result would be a l0 percent increase in the number of teachers who have a more positive attitude toward involvement in the team as an instructional force. This objective was measured by teacher response to a teacher questionnaire (Appendix C:45).

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH AND SOLUTION STRATEGY

Research

Concern about the overall effectiveness of the education of preadolescents began in the late 1800's. In 1893 the Committee of Ten suggested that subjects such as foreign languages and algebra be initiated in the last years of grammar school (grades 1-8) and also suggested a grade reorganization for a six grade elementary, and a six grade high school (Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

The first known junior high school (grades 7, 8, 9) was established in Columbus, Ohio in 1909. Although this grade configuration was established as part of a high school, researchers like G. Stanley Hall began to study drop outs, and statements like "meeting individual differences" and meeting the needs of early adolescents began to appear in literature (Wiles and Bondi, 1986).

Post World War I brought a school population boom. Many high schools began to separate into two buildings with separate administrative staffs for junior and senior levels.

Educators began speaking of the junior high school as a transition between elementary and senior high schools. As city populations continued to boom, grade configurations were often altered to accommodate the expanding populations. These alterations resulted in junior high schools that were administratively organized rather than curricularly reorganized (Alexander and George, l981).

More recently there are four factors that can be identified as having led to the emergence of the middle school.

(l) In the late 1950's and early 1960's, criticism was leveled at American schools and classrooms concerning the quality of schooling. The successful Sputnik launching in 1957 led to further criticism, especially in the area of academic achievement.

(2) The elimination of de facto segregation in the 1970's became a real force behind the middle school movement in larger cities.

(3) Increased enrollments in the 1950's and 1960's resulted in building shortages and overcrowding. Since older students in the ninth grade were better able to cope with overcrowding they were moved to the high school. A similar rationale was used to relieve overcrowding in the elementary schools by moving fifth and/or sixth grades to the junior high school.

(4) Once specific middle schools were given favorable exposure in educational journals, some administrators and school districts wanted to get in on the newest idea and so made the move to the middle school (Wiles and Bondi, l981).

Today junior high schools are being reorganized into middle schools to eliminate segregation, to alleviate population and building problems brought on by declining enrollment, to improve basic skills programs in the middle grades, and because other districts have middle schools and it is the thing to do (Alexander and George, 1981).

In establishing what is best for the middle school of the 1980's and 1990's , it is necessary to first examine the literature regarding effective schools in general. There has recently been much in the literature on effective schools. One of the most concise reports was done for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development by Squires, . Huitt, and Segars (1984) in Effective Schools and Classrooms: A Research-Based Perspective . In their synthesis of effective schools research, the authors maintain that a school's climate and leadership are the primary factors that can support the teacher behaviors of planning, classroom management, and instruction.

These factors, in turn, can promote student success, involvement, and coverage of appropriate curricula. These factors, working together, can improve student achievement.

Middle schools as part of effective schools research require the above factors. However, because of the unique developmental characteristics of the preadolescent, middle schools are different. "Researchers, just like school officials and parents, must question the means and extent to which adolescents, a less pliable group to work with than students in the early elementary grades, accept adults' values and norms" (Lipsitz, 1984:5).

The majority of middle level educators today, George (1982), Alexander (1981), and Lounsbury (1984) agree with Merenbloom that the characteristics of effective middle schools are:

1. Feature a program that responds to the physical, intellectual, social-emotional moral needs of the early adolescent learner.

2. Possess a definite curriculum plan that includes factual information or organized knowledge, skills, and personal development activities that can be correlated with each other.
3. Build on the successes of elementary education and, in turn, prepare pupils for a successful experience in the high school.
4. Employ teachers who focus on the learning needs of pupils by using a variety of teaching techniques that actively involve students.
5. Organize teachers into interdisciplinary and/or disciplinary teaching teams using blocks-of-time and modular scheduling techniques to best deliver the instructional program.
6. Recognize the importance of affective education by providing for a home-base or teacher/advisory program, stressing the importance of self-concept in the curriculum, and working as a total staff to provide a positive climate for learning.

7. Promote flexibility in the implementation of the daily, weekly, and monthly schedule of classes to meet the varying needs of students.
8. Emphasize the guidance and counseling function of each staff member by demonstrating genuine concern for the welfare of each student.
9. Evaluate the program on a regular basis and make changes that enhance the learning process. (Merenbloom, 1986).

These nine characteristics describe an effective middle school. The basic essential is to create the learning climate needed for preadolescents in the middle grades.

The most essential element of the middle school and the one to which the practicum School District is totally committed, is the interdisciplinary team structure (National Middle School Association, 1982). These interdisciplinary teams may be composed of two, four or five academic teachers with differing subject area backgrounds, who share commonality of students, space, and planning time.

The purpose of this organization is to allow for:

1. A sense of "family" or "community" with 120-250 students and the core teachers, rather than the total school population.
2. Coordination of academic classes where practical to show the interdisciplinary relatedness of all learning.
3. Providing a consistency of rules and expectations in the classrooms.
4. Increased parental contact.
5. Flexibility in scheduling of the student's day to allow for special programs, field trips, etc.
6. Extension of guidance services into the classroom, through advisor/advisee sessions. (Intermediate International Education Study, 1979).

By providing a more intimate group with which to identify, coupled with child-centered rather than subject-oriented teachers, the practicum School District is attempting to provide middle schools which will meet the needs of transescent youth.

Within the practicum School District, all 18 middle schools have grouped their students and teachers into clearly defined and interpersonally involved teams. Most of the middle schools have the foundation in place for establishing stable teaming. However, participation in authentic team teaching is not simultaneous with grouping. All teams have developed team identities, common planning times, neighboring classrooms, the ability to flex block schedules, an established advisory program and developed grade level curricula. The preliminary results of the district's Testing and Evaluation Program for Middle School, during the 1988-89 school year, showed that the majority of teams work hard to create close-knit support communities but withdraw from invitations to team teach and develop advisee programs.

When looking at effective schools research, higher achieving schools used course planning done by groups of teachers rather than by isolated individuals as one measure of academic emphasis; and staff organization was measured by whether or not teachers plan courses together, among other measurements (Squires, Huitt, Segars, 1984).

One technique to enhance school effectiveness and in turn team effectiveness is to use the effective characteristics of leadership and school climate.

The idea of loose coupling, as defined by Corbett, cited in Squires, Huitt and Segars' (1984:82), is "the extent to which action by one person requires or leads to action by another." Small, loosely coupled teams of teachers make schools more manageable; one disruptive classroom does not affect other classrooms. However, loose coupling can present problems for those interested in interdisciplinary teaming. Teachers may not know what their colleagues in the next classroom are teaching. In such instances, goal setting, accountability, curriculum coordination and connections are often not feasible.

Squires and his colleagues suggest that coupling the right areas of: student success, teachers' involvement in planning and meeting together, and coverage of the content that is tested, can result in high student achievement (Squires, Huitt, Segars, 1984).

This is not a unique phenomenon. Paul George in his 1983 publication, The Theory Z School: Beyond Effectiveness wrote that: "One of the most important developments in the capacity of the middle school to organize was the painful but profitable realization that team teaching and interdisciplinary team organization are not synonymous." Today team teaching and interdisciplinary curriculum are in the category teachers label "definitely for someone else to try."

Teachers who work as a team can accomplish the tasks of schooling more effectively and influence: 1) their students behavior, 2) the academic program, 3) the sense of group involvement which students experience; and 4) shape the programs and policies of the school as a whole. (George and Lawrence, 1982).

Solution Strategy

In the practicum school district the 1988-89 Testing and Evaluation Analysis indicated that interdisciplinary curriculum planning and the advisory program were areas of team ineffectiveness. Since the middle school advisory program is a direct responsibility of the division of pupil services it is not feasible for the practicum author to attempt any intervention strategies. Staff develoment in the area of planning does fall under the district middle school program and that is the area that was addressed.

Three possible and viable reasons for ineffective curriculum at the middle school level are: 1) Teamed teachers have not yet reached that stage of development where integration of curriculum takes place (George, 1982); 2) Teaming teachers are lacking supportive props which facilitate teamed instruction; (Doda,1981) 3) Core middle school curriculum needs to be reorganized into basic themes (Carnegie, 1989).

The Carnegie Report (1989:47) states that, "currently, middle grade curricula package ideas and information strictly by subject, making it difficult for students to see connections between ideas in different disciplines." The report advocated restructuring middle school curriculum into broad categories such as humanities and sciences. These broad general areas could then be organized around integrating themes or an interdisciplinary focus. This solution has its foundation in preadolescent research. Curriculum needs to be based on what is relevant and meaningful for the middle school student (Compton, 1983). However, such a solution would involve the revision of state curriculum frameworks and the restructuring of at least five program areas at the district level. Such an approach to increasing team effectiveness was not feasible for the practicum author.

The theory that interdisciplinary teams go through a series of four stages or phases in the life of the fully-functioning team was a viable solution to team ineffectiveness. One of the best ways, according to Merenbloom (1986) to be responsive to the needs of early adolescents is to utilize some form of team teaching. Some specific reasons for team teaching at this level are opportunites to:

1) Coordinate the total learning process for preadolescents.

2) Help students to see the wholeness that exists in learning.

3) Provide consistency to an age group that is in desperate need of structure and consistency.

4) Create a family-like atmosphere in a day and age when fewer students know the real meaning of the word "family."

5) Utilize flexible scheduling.

6) Work as a team in teaching and reinforcing a variety of learning skills.

7) Provide for the unique guidance needs of early adolescent students.

8) Organize middle level education to be a transition between elementary and high school (Merenbloom, 1986).

The majority of the district's teams and the teams in the designated school have gone through phase one, which is the organizational stage. Organizational conditions such as team rules, common process, headings for papers, and team conferences with parents have been met. In phase two the team develops a sense of community. Team goals are established, a sense of team identity prevails with a name, logo, t-shirts, and other visible common possessions; contests and special field trips, all engage to heighten and tighten the sense of community.

This phase has also been achieved by the majority of teams in the district. It was phase three, team teaching, that appeared to be the plateau where many of the districts' and the designated school teams leveled. The essentials are out of the way, and the large amount of planning time required for team teaching is more accessible. Phase four occurs when the entire school, teams and administrators, are organized through the processes of power sharing and group policy-making (George, 1982).

It is viable to assume that since this is the third year of middle school implementation in the district, that many teams are just now entering George's phase three. Teams are now ready to develop the curriculum instruction aspect of teaming. The level of maturity coupled with the need for supportive props and specific staff development geared to curriculm collaboration was the solution strategy decided on by the practicum author.

Compton (1983), writing in the May issue of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin , advocated that interdisciplinary teams utilize a grid to help establish the scope and sequence for their programs in order to avoid repetition and unnecessary overlap.

Such a grid could also be used by team members to list their respective curriculum allowing each member to recognize any commonalities or overlapping and thus correlate or reinforce each others content and skills. Further evidence was given by Maute (1989:20), a team teacher in Naperville, Illinois:

> "One of the greatest advantages of interdisciplinary teams is the opportunity it gives teachers to integrate learning among various subjects. This intertwining not only reinforces what is taught, but also more closely resembles life outside the classroom where the subjects we teach are not found in isolation, but, rather are constantly interacting with and overlapping each other."

Such an approach was implemented during the previous school year. A simple matrix (Appendex D:47) with core subjects across the horizontal axis and the designated nine weeks along the vertical axis was distributed to teams and its operation explained during the annual team visits. Insufficient time during team meetings has been the major reason for its nonuse.

Wiles and Bondi (1986) advocated a similar grid be done at the district level when middle school programs were being designed. They envisioned nine week sheets that spelled out what was to be taught and why.

They rationalized that the grid, in allowing for establishment of a time frame for covering subject matter, would give teachers a horizontal look across the curriculum that would simplify interdisciplinary efforts.

The development of a middle school curriculum grid, encompassing all core subjects and the exploratory subjects common to all middle schools, had already been approved by the practicum author's district program consultant. Therefore, prior to implementing staff development activities as a solution strategy to ineffective teaming, the author developed a curriculum grid with a summer writing team of middle level teachers from the district. This curriculum grid packet contains a mapping of each grade level's curriculum: a skills checklist for each subject area; a list of objectives for possible curriculum integration; and seven activities that could become thematic topics for correlating curriculum during any nine week period.

The purpose of such a packet was to allow interdisciplinary teams of teachers to see vital connections and commonalities in their respective curricula. Such connections help reach students with various learning styles. Students can apply what is learned in one content area much more readily when cross-curriculum connections are made (Maute, 1989).

Interdisciplinary connections can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, making learning more relevant.

By using the curriculum grid interdisciplinary teams could move along what Maute (1989:21) called the "Hierarchy of Cross-Curricular Connections." At the base of the hierarchy is the cross-curricular incident. One teacher sees a natural connection with another teacher's content and employs it in the classroom. For instance, a science teacher who knows the language arts teacher is studying adjectives, can have the class use adjectives to describe their lab experiments.

The next level of connections allows a teacher to utilize one or more other content areas in the classroom. Music, for example could be used in a mathematics class. From here, teachers may plan assignments together and ultimately do an interdisciplinary unit with a cross-curricular culminating event.

According to Maute (1989) there are three major factors in cross-curricular implementation. The first and most important is awareness of what is being taught in other classes. The second factor is planning time to look for connections, then to plan and develop those connections. The third factor is flexibility.

Teachers must be willing to give of their content; extend and enrich their content; and even leave out part of their content; if cross-curricular connections are to be successful.

In the designated practicum school, two hour planning times are available to the teachers. Flexible scheduling is an individual factor for teams though not utilized, even though the principal is an advocate of cross-curricular flexibility. The solution strategy for this practicum was staff development involving teacher awareness of various subject-area content and making cross-curricular connections.

Tightly coupled schools, using interdisciplinary teams of teachers who strive to create a supportive team climate for preadolescents; work toward integrating curriculum to improve the academic achievement of their students; find that the resulting mutual support and shared strength they encounter leads directly to benefits for students (George, 1989). Efforts at team identity can expand naturally into academic achievement areas. The designated school in this practicum was ready to move into that third phase of teaming, team teaching (George, 1982) with a support tool to help them facilitate this time consuming process.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The author consulted with the District Program Consultant for Middle School and developed a document that mapped the middle school curriculum at each grade level, making it easier for the interdisciplinary teams to correlate and integrate their curriculum. It also provided a stimulus for teams and exploratory teachers to begin initiating curriculum integration. Such a document was made available to all middle level educators in the district.

"The Ultimate Packet," the document developed by the practicum author and a group of middle school teachers, which mapped the middle school curriculum was completed and readied for distribution to the schools early in September. Prior to distribution, during the district's pre-planning sessions, five subject area program consultants offered preview sessions to their content teachers concerning the curriculum connection packet. Advanced information and overview of the curriculum tool were also presented at the district's Middle School Summer Conference in mid-August, 1989.

Distribution of "The Ultimate Packet" was completed by September 15, 1989. A cover letter explaining the intent of the curriculum mapping accompanied every packet (Attachments:49).

The Middle School Program Consultant and the practicum author organized a district workshop for all teamleaders. The focus of the workshop was instructional teaming and the integrated curriculum approach to teaming was defined and discussed. The workshop agenda also defined the related areas of team climate, team identity and team organization.

Discussion with the practicum site principal brought confirmation for the implementation of staff development activities at the practicum school to encourage greater team climate and curriculum integration. The author held a special orientation session with the entire faculty of the practicum school, giving the rationale, an overview of the curriculum, and sample activities for curriculum connections. A consultation meeting was set up with each of the school's academic teams and the one exploratory team composed of elective teachers. This special session allowed the teachers, both as teams and individuals, to discuss their level of comfort with the stages of teaming and in particular the interrelation of curriculum.

It was evident from the special sessions with teams that the author's earlier conclusions concerning team effectiveness were correct. Stimulus or proding on a continuous basis was needed if "The Ultimate Packet" was to be used by the seventh and eighth grade teams.

As District Resource Teacher for Middle School, the author continues to distribute and edit a monthly packet of information to the teams that includes: networking among teams, providing activities; listing available resources and journal articles pertinent to middle school philosophy. The major emphasis of the October and November team packets was information activities and research on the feasibility of correlating curriculum within the team's core group as well as the extended team.

Two additional on site training sessions at the practicum school were held, one in later October and the other in mid-November, where the teachers had the opportunity to discuss concerns, ask questions, and interact about the implementation and integration of their teaming curriculum. During the entire practicum period the author was available for consultation when called upon by the teams.

For the purpose of the practicum, the final meeting occurred in early December.

On site observations of the team areas and team interviews were conducted. At that time, teachers were given an additional survey, asking their personal feelings about curriculum collaboration during the first half of the school term.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Evaluation of the practicum involved the assessment of the practicum proposal's outcome objectives. Interdisciplinary team interviews (Appendix A:40) were conducted on September l5, l989, for determining the degree to which teaming had been implemented and the extent to which the team organization had been used.

The initial survey of team competencies (Appendix B:42) given to the practicum school team leaders indicated that one of the four core academic teams in the seventh and eighth grades had fully implemented the organizational and community/climate functions of teaming.

Seventh grade Team 7-A checked all items on the Teaming Competencies Checklist (Appendix B:42) except: #10 - The teachers work on interrelating their separate subjects, coordinating major assignments, correlating major units, etc.; and #11 - The teachers provide, on the average, a special teamwork activity (e.g., a recognition assembly) during each grading period.

The other seventh grade team, Team 7-B, checked the same competencies as Team 7-A but added #5 - The teachers work together to develop and implement activities that heighten the students sense of community, to their nonfunctioning competencies list.

Within the two eighth grade teams, Team 8-A checked all items on the Teaming Competencies Checklist (Appendix B:42) except #11 - The teachers provide on the average, a special teamwide activity (e.g., a recognition assembly) during each grading period. The other eighth grade team, Team 8-B checked 13 items out of the 19 listed. The six items they did not feel competent with were: #4 - The students recognize and feel a sense of belonging to the team; #5 - The teachers work together to develop and implement activities that heighten the students' sense of community; #9 - The teachers on the team use the time and the place for teamwork; #10 - The teachers work on interrelating their separate subjects, coordinating major assignments, correlating major units, etc; #11 - The teachers provide, on the average, a special teamwork activity (e.g., a recognition assembly during each grading period; and # 12 - The team teachers take turns in assuming leadership for different activities within the team when appropriate to individual strengths and interests.

The Teacher Survey on Cross-Curriculum Connections (Appendix C:45) was given to measure teacher attitude about their involvement in the team as an instructional force. This survey was given to seventh and eighth grade team teachers (with the exception of first year teachers) at the practicum site. It was perceived that because of their status, first year teachers had no prior experiences and their responses might invalidate the data. The data revealed that ninety-five percent of the teachers had made casual reference to other subject areas. Forty percent had jointly planned and implemented skill reinforcement activities and sixty-five percent of the teachers had jointly planned and implemented subject content integration activities. Forty-five percent of the teachers had been involved in the development and implementation of an interdisciplinary unit. The majority of teachers involved in making curriculum connections were the seventh grade teachers. Only two of the eighth grade core team teachers had ever been involved in planning and implementing curriculum connections.

Following the distribution of "The Ultimate Packet," completion of previously outlined staff development activities, and on site observations, the author noted that three of the four teams had provided some type of team identity display.

Two of the four academic teams were displaying some type of instructional work by the students. One of the displays involved coordination of curriculum by two or more content areas. None of the seventh and eighth teams displayed instructional work at the beginning of the practicum; thus, a seventy-five percent increase in the creation of a more effective team climate had occurred at the practicum site.

At the conclusion of the staff development identified by this practicum, teachers again completed Teaming Competencies Checklist (Appendix B:42). Team 7-A that had checked all competencies except subject integration #10 and special teamwide recognitions activities #11, checked all the competencies on the second checklist.

The other seventh grade team, 7-B, that previously felt lacking in team climate and creating a sense of belonging for the students; subject integration; and teamwide student recognition activities; checked all the competencies listed. One factor that contributed to the dramatic change from last year, apart from the practicum implementation, was the status of the team's leader. Team 7-B's leader felt more competent and secure after several months in the position than when the original checklist was given in September. In September this team leader was new to the campus and the team.

Within the two eighth grade teams, Team 8-A checked all the competencies on the Teaming Competencies Checklist. Team 8-B checked all competencies except #10 - The teachers work on interrelating their separate subjects, coordinating major assignments, correlating major units, etc.; and #12 - The team teachers take turns in assuming leadership for different activities within the team when appropriate to individual strengths and interests. The original six competencies that the team listed as nonfunctioning were reduced to two competencies.

Results of the team interviews (Appendix A:40), The Teaming Competencies Checklist (Appendix B:42) and on site observations showed that three of the four interdisciplinary teams were operating at an effective level on the organizational and community/climate functions of teaming.

The Teacher Survey on Cross-Curriculum Connections (Appendix C:45) was given again at the end of the ten week period for implementation of the practicum. One hundred percent of the teachers had made casual reference to other subject areas without prior planning with another content teacher.

Fifty-five percent of the teachers felt they were deliberately working to reinforce skills taught by another subject area teacher. Fifty-one percent of the teachers indicated that they collaborated with another teacher in skill instruction. Eighty percent of the teams responded affirmatively to having done some collaboration or connecting with other subject content and other teachers. Fifty percent of the teachers had been involved or were in the process of planning and implementing a complete interdisciplinary unit.

The author has concluded that "The Ultimate Packet" and the personally directed staff development program set up by the practicum was successful in increasing the effectiveness of teaming in the practicum school. Seventy-five percent of the teams at the practicum school are functioning effectively. Teacher attitude concerning the organizational use of the team as an instructional force increased fifty percent.

One factor that became evident in the evaluation of the practicum data was the effectiveness of team leaders. Team 7-B had a team leader, new to the school, who had been a very effective team leader at another school in the district. This team leader openly pushed for greater involvement and commitment to the middle school philosophy.

Team 7-A's team leader was a member of that team last year and replaced the former team leader who transferred to another school. The new team leader has been committed to implementing the middle school philosophy. Two of the members of Team 7-A are new to the school this year.

The most ineffective of the teams was Team 8-B. The teachers have a very secondary oriented attitude concerning school climate and instructional practices. Data from Team 8-B revealed they believed eighth grade should function as a miniature high school to prepare students for the high school experience. A minimum of team community/climate activities and attempts at curriculum connections were employed.

It is evident that part of the effectiveness of teams is the commitment of the team leader to the middle school design and the leader's ability to move the team along the committed philosophical route. Another aspect of team effectiveness is the principal's ability to interview astutely and hire those teachers that possess compatible middle level philosophies.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author has facilitated the development, distribution and implementation of "The Ultimate Packet", that can be a useful tool in increasing the effectiveness of the teaming process. It must be noted that teaming is a deveoplmental process on the part of the team teachers. Not all teams arrive at an effective functioning level at the same time. It is only after the organizational and community/climate functions of teaming have been addressed that the ultimate use of the team as an instructional force can take place.

The curriculum integration packet devised and implemented through this practicum is unique in content to the practicum district. The structure of the packet, when used by other districts with their respective curriculum, is highly recommendable as a tool for increasing the effectiveness of the teaming process.

Secondary teachers, by the nature of their training which emphasizes single content delivery, must be trained in the process of integrating different subject areas.

This must be evident in order for them to be effective contributing members of successful middle school interdisciplinary teams.

"The Ultimate Packet" is available to all middle level educators on an on-going basis. The packet is now available through the National Middle Grades Resource Center at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Dissemination of the document has gained favorable comments from three Florida districts that have asked for workshops on curriculum collaboration within middle school teams. The National Middle School Association has contacted the practicum district and the practicum author for discussions on possible articles for The Middle School Journal and perhaps a monograph on the subject of the team as an instructional force.

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Appendix A

1988-89 Team Interview Questions

School_____

Team_____

Date_____

1. How often do you meet, and for what length of time?

2. Who is involved in your team meeting and planning? (adminstrative staff, guidance, elective instructors, community, parent)

3. Do you have team goals? (If yes, what are they?)

4. Do you know what your team members teach? (daily, weekly, monthly)

5. What types of team activities have you planned for this year?

6. Do you have a team leader council?

7. What's getting in the way of effective teaming and teaching?

Appendix B

Teaming Competencies Checklist

Indicate by a check mark those items listed below which you perceive to be implemented by your team.

_____ 1. The team is organized so that teachers share the same students, space in the school, and schedule.

_____ 2. The membership on the team represents all the basic academic subjects.

_____ 3. The team has some common rules, procedures, and expectations.

_____ 4. The students recognize and feel a sense of belonging to the team.

_____ 5. The teachers work together to develop and implement activities that heighten the students' sense of community.

_____ 6. The teachers on the team develop a sense of commitment to each other and draw professional and personal support from each other.

_____ 7. Teams have frequent parent conferences and good home and school relationships.

_____ 8. There is adequate planning time and a planning space used by the team members for their work.

_____ 9. The teachers on the team use the time and the place for teamwork.

_____10. The teachers work on interrelating their separate subjects, coordinating major assignments, correlating major units, etc.

_____11. The teachers provide, on the average, a special teamwide activity (e.g., a recognition assembly) during each grading period.

_____12. The team teachers take turns in assuming leadership for different activities within the team when appropriate to individual strengths and interests.

_____13. Teachers meet to discuss their students, at least weekly.

_____14. Team teachers develop and carry out joint strategies in an attempt to resolve the problems identified in the above statement.

_____15. Teams have carefully selected team leaders.

_____16. Teams have some control over items like the schedule, the budget and the curriculum.

_____17. There is a formal school wide group and process for shared decision making, composed of teachers, administrators and others which meet regularly and frequently.

_____18. The grade level coordinator/principal works with individual teams regularly and frequently.

_____19. Team members generally feel a sense of success and satisfaction about their work together (George, 1982).

Appendix C

Teacher Survey on Cross-Curriculum Connections

Please respond to the following questions concerning your participation in the teaming function of making curriculum connections an integral part of your team teaching. Respond by : always, sometimes, or never.

_____ 1. Do you make an effort to be aware of the content being presented by the other teachers on your team?

_____ 2. Do you make casual reference to subject areas other than your own?

_____ 3. Do you make an effort to reinforce skills taught by other subject area teachers?

_____ 4. Do you participate in joint planning and implementation of skill instruction with one or more subject area teachers?

_____ 5. Do you particpate in joint planning and implementation of the integration of subject content?

_____ 6. Do you contribute to the development and implementation of interdisciplinary units?

_____ 7. Do you use "The Ultimate Packet" in your planning of curriculum integration?

Appendix D

Grid for Cross-Curriculum Connections

	LANGUAGE ARTS	MATH	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	READING
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					